

**CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION
TOWN OF EAST WINDSOR
11 RYE STREET
EAST WINDSOR, CONNECTICUT**

MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING VIA ZOOM

Tuesday, May 19, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

These minutes are not official until approved at a subsequent meeting.

Members Present: Rebecca Talamini, Richard Leborious, Tanya Unsworth, RuthAnn
Lansner, Jim Richards, Nicole Vacila and Heather Spencer
Members Absent: None
Others: First Selectman Jason Bowsza, Sarah Muska, Tom Lansner, Charles
Nordell, and James Barton
Press: None

I. Call to Order

Co-Chair Ms. Rebecca Talamini called the Special Meeting to Order at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom Meeting: <http://zoom.us/j/3326833563>; Meeting ID: 332 683 3563

II. Attendance

All in attendance.

III. Approval of Minutes

It was **MOVED** (Unsworth) and **SECONDED** (Spencer) and **PASSED** (7-0) (In favor: R. Talamini, T. Unsworth, R. Leborious, R. Lansner, N. Vacila, J. Richards and H. Spencer; Opposed: None) that the Commission approves the Minutes of May 5, 2020 Special Meeting as presented.

IV. Public Participation

Mr. Tom Lansner, 27 Laurel Circle, addressed the Commission. He has been thinking of the current proposal of 15% turnout for the referendum to either approve or disapprove a proposed budget. He wondered what would happen if all three referendums failed with 50% turnout and the Board of Finance establishes a budget, those who voted no in those referendums are left with no recourse. He is concerned this will not be a good option, ignoring those who turn out to vote and their votes are ignored.

V. Review Charter

Ms. Rebecca Talamini noted she had sent to all members a copy of the Charter that had been red-lined in Section 8 as requested at the last meeting. Ms. Talamini noted that Ms. Nicole Vacila had a few comments as she was not in attendance at the last meeting. Ms. Vacila remarked she is looking at the percentage of voter turnout at a different angle. She did some research of the last three budget cycles and the turnout numbers. Those numbers were: 2017, three referendums, turnouts of 8%, 9%, and 7%; 2018, one referendum, turnout 13%; 2019, three referendums, and turnouts of 17%, 14%, and 16%. She noted that out of seven referendums, only two were over the 15% threshold. She feels that proposal of 15% threshold is too high and fears excluding voters who chose to have a voice. She doesn't believe it is the job of this Commission to encourage the behavior of the voters. She does not like the voter threshold, but she is in favor of three and done. Ms. Heather Spencer that Ms. Vacila for researching those numbers, as she agreed with Ms. Vacila about the threshold, feeling the number was too high. Mr. Richard LeBoriosis disagreed, indicating he felt threshold percentage was too low. He believes it encourages the voters and community to participate in the process. He believes citizens have a responsibility as well and not make only a minimum number of registered votes determine what happens in the town. If the turnout is under a certain percentage, then the elected officials, who study the ramifications of the budget. If people think that only 4% of the registered voters should make the decision for everyone, he doesn't agree and it should be determined by the Board of Finance. Mr. Jim Richards agreed but disagreed. He agrees that if people don't participate, then the Board of Finance should make the decision as they are elected and duly responsible. He is not against having a turnout percentage, but believes 15% is a little high. He is concerned about making this change as the town cannot afford another 2% budget year. Mr. LeBoriosis addressed Mr. Lansner's public comment in the beginning of the meeting. He remarked that even if the budget is turned down in three referendums but 50% turnout, the Board of Finance would adopt a budget. Hopefully, they will listen to the people and adopt a budget according to what the voter has expressed. Mr. Richards wants to caution everyone that keeping the high percentage may cost the changes of the charter, especially the 2% cap on budgets. He doesn't believe it is a bad idea, he feels that maybe it should be added during another charter review. Mr. Leboriosis disagreed indicating the Presidential Election brings a massive representation of the town and it could prevail.

A lengthy discussion was held among all members discussing public participation in town budget processes, 15% threshold and 2% budget increase cap.

Ms. Talamini noted the Commission was charged with reviewing the charter's budget process as outlined in Chapter 8 of the Town Charter as the Board of Selectmen would like to have this on the ballot for November. Mr. Richards reminded everyone, the questions are not the final decision of this Commission, but of the Board of Selectmen

and we could issue two scenarios when presenting. Mr. LeBoriosis indicated the Commission should issue one report to the Board of Selectmen.

It was **MOVED** (Richards) and **SECONDED** (Vaclia) that the Commission put forward to the Board of Selectmen changing Chapter 8, Section 5 wherein a total of three referendums will be held and if after three referendums, a budget has not passed, a budget shall be returned to the Board of Finance.

A discussion was held. An inquiry if the motion should include scheduling a public hearing and having the town attorney review the document. The consensus was it should be all one motion. It was also questioned if the 15% turnout should be removed from the draft of changes which were made and reviewed.

The motion was revised.

It was **MOVED** (Richards) and **SECONDED** (Vaclia) and **PASSED** (5-2) (In favor: R. Talamini, T. Unsworth, N. Vacila, J. Richards and H. Spencer; Opposed: R. Leboriosis and R. Lansner) the Commission put forward to the Board of Selectmen changing Chapter 8, Section 5 wherein a total of three referendums will be held and if after three referendums, a budget has not passed, a budget shall be returned to the Board of Finance to establish and approve a budget for the town and to remove the 15% of total registered voter turnout throughout this Section.

Ms. Talamini asked there were any other changes in Chapter 8 that anyone would like to discuss. She noted there was a change in Chapter 6 changing the name title of Town Treasurer to Finance Director. It was noted that the language should read, "The Finance Director shall also serve as the Town Treasurer." A question regarding the changing the name if this was a position which would require more money than the Town Treasurer receives. It quickly noted that the Town Treasurer already has the qualifications and salary of a Finance Director as the change is a more appropriate title.

A discussion was held.

It was **MOVED** (Vaclia) and **SECONDED** (Richards) and **PASSED** (6-1) (In favor: R. Talamini, T. Unsworth, N. Vacila, J. Richards, R. Lansner and H. Spencer; Opposed: R. Leboriosis) the Commission change the language for Chapter 6, Section 6 Finance Director may be the Town Treasurer rather than shall be the Town Treasurer.

Ms. Talamini had a question about Chapter 7, Section 2 (3) discussion the Pension Plan Administrator shall be the Town Treasurer. Should that be left as Town Treasurer? It was determined to leave it in as Town Treasurer. Another question was Chapter 11, Section 3 discussing conflict of interest while a member of the Board of Finance. It was decided no changes will be made. Also discussed were the changes for the dates of the

CIP, it was decided that change fell under the grammar/technical change the Board of Selectmen asked in their two charges to the Commission.

A brief discussion was held.

It was **MOVED** (LeBoriosis) and **SECONDED** (Vaclia) and **PASSED** (7-0)(In favor: R. Talamini, T. Unsworth, N. Vacila, J. Richards, R. Lansner, R. Leboriosis and H. Spencer; Opposed: None) the Commission set the Public Hearing for June 2, 2020 and send the revisions made to the Town Attorney for review.

VI. Adjournment

It was **MOVED** (Richards) and **SECONDED** (Unsworth) and **PASSED** (7-0) (In favor: R. Talamini, R. Leboriosis, T. Unsworth, R. Lansner, N. Vaclia, J. Richards, H. Spencer ; Opposed: None) that the Charter Revision Commission adjourns the Special Meeting of May 19, 2020 at 8:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Denise M. Piotrowicz
Recording Secretary